



Memorandum

TO: Chris Jordan, City Manager

FROM: Peter Spir, Associate Planner

DATE: March 22, 2010

SUBJECT: Amending Community Development Code (CDC) Chapter 25 as it applies to single family homes, accessory dwelling units and other development in the Willamette Historic District (CDC-09-01).

Purpose

The Willamette Historic District has been designated as a National Historic District. This designation heightens the importance of amendments to CDC Chapter 25 that will help preserve the architecture, height, massing, setbacks and other characteristics of historic single family homes and accessory dwelling units (ADU).

Background

The goal of the district is to showcase the primary or secondary historic homes (homes that define the district's character or have similar architectural features, respectively). These homes are generally 24-28 feet from grade to top of peak. The average square footage of such homes is somewhere between 1,400 and 1,800 square feet. In order for a visitor or passersby to fully appreciate the 100-year old historic Queen Anne home, it cannot be hidden between two new homes 35 feet tall comprising 2,800 square feet with monolithic side to side running ridgelines. Thus, the overriding purpose of the proposed changes is to protect and honor existing historic homes by making new construction and home remodeling deferential in height and mass to existing historic homes.

Similarly, although ADUs are a very popular means of increasing housing options and urban density, some recent ADUs have been almost as big as the main house they are supposed to be accessory to. These large ADUs have resulted in loss of privacy and sunlight for adjoining neighbors. Being on small lots, larger ADUs can be visually overwhelming and can create the impression that the house extends to the rear property line. The proposed amendments address the scale of ADUs (see Exhibit A, page 25-19). Other proposed code changes include language relating to partitions, sidewalks, foundations, lot coverage and setbacks.

Discussion

The amendments, in various forms, were reviewed by the West Linn Historic Resource Advisory Board, the Clackamas County Historic Review Board, the Planning Commission, the City Attorney, and residents of the Willamette Falls National Historic District and Willamette Neighborhood Association. City Council has already held two hearings on this matter.

At the March 8, 2010 hearing, and through subsequent correspondence, the City Council and the public made it clear that there were ongoing concerns and issues to be addressed in the following subject areas:

- District Boundary Map
- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Building materials (windows, roofing)
- Partitions and lot sizes
- Parking
- Sidewalks
- The composition of the Historic Review Board and their responsibilities

Staff will provide updated information to the Council during the week of March 15, 2010.